

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 OMB-01 AID-20 L-03 IGA-02 MMS-03 H-03

RSR-01 /097 W

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R 231850Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5079

INFO SECDEF

JCS

CINCSO

S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 3177

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OGEN HO

SUBJ: CONSEQUENCES OF TRANSFERRING USCINCSO COMMAND

FROM PANAMA

BEGIN SUMMARY: COUNTRY TEAM BELIEVES THAT THE OVERALL EFFECT IN HONDURAS OF A MOVE OF USSOUTHCOM FROM PANAMA TO SOME SITE IN THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE LIMITED. END SUMMARY.

1. MOST HONDURANS WOULD AGREE ON RETENTION OF SUFFICIENT U.S. FORCES TO PROTECT THE CANAL UNTIL OR UNLESS ADEQUATE ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE UNDER NEW TREATIES. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO BURNING CONCERN ON THE PART OF HONDURAN OFFICIALS, OR THE GENERAL PUBLIC WITH RESPECT TO THE LARGER MULTI-PURPOSE SOUTHCOM PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE OR THE GOP OBJECTIONS TO IT, AN ACQUIESCENCE TO PANAMANIAN DESIRES WOULD PROBABLY BE SEEN BY MOST HONDURANS WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FOREIGN AFFAIRS AS A POSITIVE GESTURE ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES, AND ON THE WHOLE IT WOULD PROBABLY BE PLAYED THAT WAY BY MOST MEDIA. THE COMMUNISTS AND OTHER RADICALS WHO PRESENTLY EXCORIATE ZONE INSTALLATIONS WOULD, OF COURSE, FIND SOME WAY TO MAKE ANTI-US HAY OUT OF

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A MOVE FROM PANAMA, POSSIBLY JUST BY FOCUSING ON DAVID'S

VICTORY OVER WICKED GOLIATH, AND SOME OF THIS WOULD SEEP THROUGH INTO THE BROADER PUBLIC REACTION.

2. MILITARILY, THE COUNTRY TEAM BELIEVES THAT COORDINATION OF US MILITARY ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA CAN EVENTUALLY BE CARRIED ON AS EFFECTIVELY FROM A SITE OTHER THAN PANAMA (ALTHOUGH PROXIMITY AND GOOD AIR COMMUNICATIONS HAVE BEEN A BOON TO US HERE IN HONDURAS), THE EFFECTIVE DISASTER RELIEF AND EVACUATION EFFORTS WOULD PRESUMABLY REQUIRE A SITE RELATIVELY NEAR LA. INTERCHANGE WITH LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY, TRAINING ACTIVITIES, ETC. WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE CONTINUED MORE SUCCESSFULLY IN THE SPANISH-SPEAKING, TROPICAL SETTING OF PUERTO RICO RATHER THAN IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES. A MOVE TO PUERTO RICO RATHER THAN SOME SITE FURTHER REMOVED FROM THE MIDPOINT OF LATIN AMERICA, MIGHT ALSO SERVE TO DAMPEN ANY FEELING WHICH MIGHT ARISE, ESPECIALLY ON THE PART OF HC MILITARY, THAT THE DISMANTLING OF THE PANAMA BASES IS ANOTHER, AND TANGIBLE SIGN OF US DISENGAGEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA.

3. IN SUM, ALTHOUGH THERE WOULD LIKELY BE A LINGERING NOSTALGIA FOR THE OLD, CLOSE-BY, AND OFTEN USEFUL PRESENCE OF UNCLE SAM'S FORCES IN THE ZONE, WE THINK THAT IN ALL MAJOR RESPECTS THE HONDURANS WOULD ACCEPT A MOVE AS AN INEVITABLE SIGN OF CHANGING TIMES AND ADAPT TO IT.  
SANCHEZ

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